

Witness: Katherine Strauch Sullivan
Jurisdiction: Baltimore County

Bill: SB493 Elections – Ranked–Choice Voting – Contests for Presidential Nomination in 2028
Sponsor: Senator Kagan
Position: OPPOSE

Recent polling suggests that a majority of Americans on both sides of the aisle fear for the survival of the American democratic system. Ranked-choice voting (RCV), also called “instant runoff voting,” would be harmful to American elections.

Below is the evidence to back up that claim.

- 1. ERROR RATES FOR RCV ELECTIONS REMAIN HIGHER THAN THOSE OF TRADITIONAL ELECTIONS.** Instructions for RCV ballots are generally cumbersome, often confusing voters. This results in more citizens having their votes thrown away because of an overly complex system.
- 2. WITH RANKED-CHOICE VOTING, NOT ALL VOTES COUNT.** “Exhausted ballots” in RCV elections do not count towards the final tally. Because of ballot exhaustion, winners of RCV races do not necessarily represent the choice of all voters who participated. Below are two races supporting this claim:



MAINE’S 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2018 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY:

Although a total of 126,139 votes were cast, only 117,250 votes counted towards the final round.

This means that approximately seven percent of voters—nearly 9,000 people—had their voices silenced by ballot exhaustion.¹³



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA’S 2010 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS GENERAL ELECTION:

After 20 rounds of tabulations, 53 percent of ballots had been exhausted, and only 8,200 ballots contributed towards the final results.¹⁴

More ballots were thrown out than were counted.

3. **RANK-CHOICE VOTING HAVE LOWER VOTER TURNOUT RATES.** A multitude of studies support this claim but to name one, a study of San Francisco elections from 1995 to 2011 revealed a strong relationship between a decline in voter turnout and the adoption of RCV. Because RCV is more complex than traditional voting, the system inherently discourages new and infrequent voters from participating. Between voter confusion, high rates of ballot exhaustion, and the difficulty of tabulating the results, the RCV risks are not worth the few rewards.
4. **RANKED-CHOICE VOTING CHANGES AND DELAYS THE ELECTION COUNTING PROCESS.** Because of the convoluted and centralized tabulation process, counting the final results in RCV elections is time consuming, and rarely are election results available on Election Day.



**MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA'S
2009 MAYORAL RACE:**

The election office estimated that, for a turnout of 70,000 voters, tabulation would take 37 eight-hour shifts with 102 election officials working.

In other words, tabulation was estimated to take 30,192 man-hours or nearly 13 days of round-the-clock counting.²⁴



**NEW YORK CITY'S 2021 MAYORAL
DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY:**

NYC's primary took 15 days to reach a conclusion, with the two final candidates only separated by slightly more than one percent of the vote.²⁵

A contributing factor to the delay was the erroneous inclusion of 135,000 test ballots.²⁶

SAY NO TO RANK CHOICE VOTING IN MARYLAND. The good news is that eliminating and restricting RCV has bipartisan support in state governments across the country. **Such a needlessly complicated voting system leads to voter confusion, lower turnout, and slower election results.** Strengthening trust in the election process should not be a partisan issue. Banning ranked-choice voting is a measure that everyone ought to support to protect election integrity.

WE ASK THAT THE COMMITTEE OPPOSE SB493.